



## **FACT SHEET**

# **BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS**

SOUTH DAKOTA FIELD OFFICE • 310 ROUNDUP STREET • BELLE FOURCHE, SOUTH DAKOTA 57717 • [WWW.BLM.GOV/MT](http://WWW.BLM.GOV/MT)

### **South Dakota Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision**

### **FACT SHEET: Wildland Fire Ecology and Management**

**Program Contacts:** Travis Lipp, Fire Management Specialist (605) 892-7013

#### **Fire Management**

Fires in the planning area are aggressively suppressed because of mixed ownership that includes woodlands, croplands, rangelands and high values associated with wildland urban interface (WUI). The planning area crosses several fire management borders, both geographical and organizational. The Eastern Montana/Dakotas District Office in Miles City provides suppression resources and management for BLM lands within Harding County in northwestern South Dakota which is within the Northern Rockies Geographic Area. The remainder of the planning area is within the Rocky Mountain Geographic Area. The closest available fire suppression resources provide initial attack, regardless of jurisdiction.

Outside of the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District, local volunteer fire departments (VFD) provide direct fire suppression on BLM lands. Through an annual operating plan, the South Dakota Division of Wildland Fire (SDDWF) and its cooperators provide direct fire suppression on those BLM lands within the boundaries of the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District.

The SDFO Fire Management Plan provides current direction for fire management activities. The draft SD RMP would incorporate the Fire Management Plan under all alternatives (management common to all alternatives). The plan divides the landscape into Fire Management Units (FMUs), where objectives, strategies and constraints of the RMP can be described, as well as vegetation, fuel types, values at risk, WUI areas and other characteristics.

For each FMU, management recommendations are developed for the following fire management activities: wildfire suppression, prescribed fire and non-fire fuels treatments, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ESR), and community assistance/protection. The planning area includes three FMUs: Exemption Area, Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC and the remainder of South Dakota. Fire suppression in the draft SD RMP, would be similar regardless of the alternative chosen.

#### **Hazardous Fuels/Forest Management**

Treatment efforts in the planning area have been focused in WUI areas within the Exemption Area and the Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC. The most significant concern and constraint within these WUI areas is the amount and proximity of communities, homes, businesses, municipal buildings and commercial developments. Forested stands in these areas consist of very dense, mid-aged stands of ponderosa pine. Due to fire exclusion and a lack of active forest management, these stands now are dangerously susceptible to wildfire. A large crown fire could quickly outpace suppression capabilities and could result in another stand replacement fire event similar to the Grizzly Gulch Fire that occurred within the Exemption Area in 2002.

In consideration of the WUI that surrounds these areas a high priority has been placed on the Exemption Area and Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC for fuels reduction work. Under all alternatives, additional mechanical and prescribed fire projects would be planned and implemented at the project level throughout the planning area to reduce fuels and enhance the health of the forest and prairie ecosystems.

Mechanical and prescribed fire treatments are being utilized to: reduce risk to life, property and natural resources; reduce fuel loads; achieve desired forest and rangeland health; improve wildlife habitat; control encroachment in meadow areas and deciduous draws and encourage hardwood establishment. Limitations on all activities are identified for special management areas, and address the use of ground-based harvest and slash-treating equipment.

Within the planning area nine counties (Butte, Custer, Fall River, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Perkins and Stanley) and one city (Lead) have developed Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). The principal objective of these CWPPs is to reduce the risk of wildfire impacts to life, property, critical infrastructure and natural resources in the WUI areas. As directed by the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA), these plans identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments. This legislation allows the BLM to work cooperatively with counties to consider the priorities of local communities as hazardous fuel reduction and forest management projects are being developed and implemented.

The main difference in fuels management between the Alternatives in the Draft SD RMP, is that Alternative C would not allow prescribed fire to be used in Greater Sage-Grouse priority protection areas and Alternative C would require the BLM to rest areas from livestock grazing for two growing seasons instead of one growing season after a prescribed burn.